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ABSTRACT

The policies, purposes, and guidelines of "Stage 40," an educational repertory company for students, are presented in this paper, which also explains how the company functions. The paper discusses the company's history, the relationship between the company and academics, and the responsibilities of a company member. Letters by the board members concerning what their membership has meant to them, as well as the company constitution and an explanation of the point system used in classifying the actors are included. (DF)

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"Stage 40" Handbook

Mill River Union High School

North Clarendon, Vermont

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"Stage 40" Handbook

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1981 - 1982 Board of Directors

Mr. Peter Marsh, Director
James Gilmour
Joan Lattuca
Christopher Rhodes
Jennifer Taylor
Michael Upton
Jeffrey Weeks

Company Stage Manager -- Kevin Lawrence

Company Producer -- Scott Lorimer

Company Costume Managers -- John Burton
Lynn Hyzer

Company Prop Manager -- Jeffrey Weeks

Company Lighting Manager -- Christopher Rhodes

Company Make-up Manager -- April Leach

Company Historian -- Michael Smith

INTRODUCTION

The "Stage 40" Handbook is a publication of the policies of this company as drawn up by the Board of Directors. In this Handbook will be found the purposes of the company and the guidelines necessary to keep the company running smoothly. This booklet also gives new members, and people interested in becoming members, an idea of what "Stage 40" is all about.

By providing this Handbook, the Board of Directors clearly states the goals and the responsibilities of the company and makes them easily accessible to all of its members and their families.

WHAT IS "STAGE 40"?

"Stage 40," a repertory company, is an acting group at Mill River Union High School which uses and trains a main body of people for all of its shows. These people form the company. In each show the company draws heavily on its established membership, making up the balance of work with new members who are entering the company by working on their first show.

In "Stage 40" a point system is used. Its purpose is two-fold. First, it serves to rank persons according to the time and effort put in by each individual. Secondly, since members cannot be paid for their work, it serves as a form of payment. There are three divisions of membership in "Stage 40" -- Apprentice - a title given to members with less than 25 points; Player - a title awarded to members with 25 to 50 points; and Honor Player - a title awarded to members with an achievement of over 50 points in the company.

The major difference between a drama club and an educational repertory company is that drama clubs tend to be less organized and more sporatic with their productions, where a repertory company plans a season's productions and events and then carries them out with a core of individuals in continually changing roles.

Among those positions given points by "Stage 40" are:

Leading roles - The play centers around these roles. Leads usually have the most lines and on-stage time. These roles are most often the most difficult to portray.

Minor roles - Minor roles do not have as many lines or as much stage time as do major roles. The main purpose of a minor role is to support the main character and to give the play depth. It must be stressed that a minor role requires the actor's presence at all rehearsals and his or her awareness of the fact that the role is crucial to the smoothness of the production.

Student Director - The director of a show is the person who is responsible for all of the acting, speaking and movement as well as the artistic concept of the play. The director shows the actors different techniques and methods of how to work on their characters. The director is also important to the actor for moral support and he should always be available to the actor to discuss the show and its development. Student directors are in full charge of all aspects of the play and they must make all their designers aware of their concepts. The time required is varied according to productions, but it will always be substantial.

Stage Manager - The stage manager's job is to run the show for the director. This job is one of the most demanding in any productions. He or she is responsible for the actors being on stage at the right time. He or she is responsible for all the technical crews, such as lighting, props, setting, costumes, and make-up. The stage manager is the director's right hand person, and he or she does what ever the director needs done on a production. The entire management of the physical area of the stage is the stage manager's responsibility. (Good stage managers never forget to bring the director a cup of coffee!)

Lighting Designers - The lighting designer is told by the director what the show will need for lighting effects. The designer than plans how to position the lights, the numbers he or she will need, and the filters and circuits he or she will need. After the director agrees with the plans, the lighting director sees that the lighting is installed. The design must be carried out several weeks in advance of the production and the designer is required to be at all rehearsals for two weeks prior to the play. Time can usually be planned outside the rehearsal schedule before those weeks.

Master Carpenter - The master carpenter works directly for the set designer and the stage manager. The person in this job serves as overseer of

construction of the finished set. A knowledge of carpentry is essential for the undertaking of this position.

Costume Designer - The costume designer must first understand the characters as they are to be seen, both physically and mentally. The director must approve sketches of the designs and then the designer must oversee the construction. This is most often the time consuming job.

Set Designer - If the director does not design a production a student set designer may be employed. His job is to talk concept with the director, sketch the set and have it approved, and finally to build a small scale model of the set. He then serves as advisor to the master carpenter in construction.

Choreographer - The choreographer adds dance to musicals. The job requires first the teaching of movement and dance techniques to the actors, and then the design and direction of the actual choreography.

Tech Crews - Tech crews do the physical-technical work on a production. These crews do the work in the areas of scene painting, production, set construction, lighting, properties, sound, etc. The last three weeks of a show the tech crews work full schedules.

Producer - The producer is responsible for the sale and promotion of the production. He or she is in charge of all the costs and must see to it that the show stays within its budget. The producer runs the house - ushers, tickets, etc. - at all performances.

Musicans - Used mostly in musicals, but sometimes to provide mood effects in non-musicals, a musician is a person who becomes part of the sound, and therefore movement, of a play. Actors learn to take cues from the music and, although often the musician is not on stage, he or she becomes necessary at every rehearsal in order for the puzzle-like form of a play to work.

Company Managers - (Stage, Costume, Lighting, Sound, Make-up, Production)

The company managers are appointed by the Board of Directors to serve for a period of one year. They are responsible for all materials in their particular area. All individual production designers will be responsible to the Company Manager in their area in relation to the use and care of company owned materials. Company managers will see that production designers do not exceed their budgets, and will be responsible for a continual up-to-date inventory of the company's materials.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - Elected by the company each spring for the following year, the seven person board governing "STAGE 40" acts as a production agent, artistic management and business management for the company. As "Stage 40" seeks to primarily fund itself, the Board is responsible for making all financial decisions. The members serve one or two year terms and govern all the company's activity during that time. All show directors and company managers are responsible to the Board. Members must expect to attend monthly meetings in the evening, and to attend one or two summer meetings.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE COMPANY

"Stage 40" began in 1975, the year Mill River opened, as an outlet for work in all phases of theatre arts. Its purpose is to give high school students an experience in the professional approach to the performing arts. When the company was formed, after a series of workshops, in the fall of 1975, it elected its first Board of Directors and planned the first season. It was decided that the first production would be a low budget musical, You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. Students began a series of bake sales and car washes to earn the $600.00 royalty fee. The production, done with almost no set and little lighting was a success and earned the company enough money so that the production costs of a one-act play could be met and we could make our first appearance in competition. American Primitive was rated well. In the spring two more low budget one-acts, Next and The Loveliest Afternoon of the Year were produced. At the year's end "Stage 40" entered a grant request to attempt to build a lighting system in order to train students in the art of theatre lighting. The grant was awarded as part of the "Arts in the Curriculum." We also established the "Stage 40" Achievement Awards to honor outstanding theatre contributions within the company.

The Board of Directors adopted a point system for members of the company and established the positions of Apprentice and Player.

In the fall of 1976 the company decided to take a risk and to produce a show which would require elaborate staging and design work. Finally the company would be able to involve large numbers of students in a production. The financial risk was high and the company realized that poor audience attendence would fold "Stage 40." Godspell was selected and production costs of over $2,500.00 were known to be the risk. The new lighting system arrived and Godspell went into production. The company proved its strength and met its production costs. The show won artistic acclaim and as a result the company was

asked to produce a children's play as "Artists in Residence" for Crossroads Arts Council. The Wind in the Willows went into immediate production, and, in February, played to 2,000 area young people. We were now financially solvent. The spring saw the company enter the state one-act play competition again. The entry, The Farmer's Daughter..., received a high rating. The year concluded with two one-acts, Balcony Scene and The Fisherman, and a banquet and awards. The first Board of Directors Award for Contribution to High School Theatre was presented.

Sponsoring an assembly series and combining with Pop Rock to do an original revue, A Broadway Cabaret, opened the 77-78 season. Cabaret took us to local high schools as well as to the Hartford (Connecticut) Civic Center. Invitations to perform arrived from all over the northeast. In November Cabaret closed and our second major musical with a budget risk of over $3,000 was cast. The Me Nobody Knows received outstanding reviews and involved the work of six student designers. The one-act play entry, Adaptation, won district, Southern Vermont, Vermont State, and highest New England Drama Festival ratings, and all four members of its cast were awarded All-New England recognition.

The children's play, ...Fenda Maria, was a major technical show and played to 2,000 area young people.

The company went into its fourth year as an established theatre group. The opening production was The Crucible which played to 2,000 high school students bused in for day performances. Kids, a Revue and three student directed scenes were presented in December. The spring term saw the company host the New England Drama Festival with Castleton College, as well as seeing our production of The Trial of the Catonsville Nine winning district, Southern Vermont, Vermont State and New England honors. Three of its cast members were selected to All-New England Cast. The production was honored with Best Technical Achievement in New England for its set design. The company closed the year with a comic piece, Revue Unique. "Stage 40" is listed by the American Theatre Association as a producer of children's theatre.

The fifth season opened with a revival of Thornton Wilder's classic Our Town. It was again subject of high school performances as well as being selected as a finalist for the Moss Hart Memorial Award. The set was awarded Best Set Design in Northern New England by the I.T.S. "Stage 40" again presented live full production of children's theatre with The Prince Who Wouldn't Talk. The production was given "Artist in Residence" status again. Our production of Spoon River Anthology won District and Vermont State honors. It went on to receive an Excellent in the New England Drama Festival, place three of the cast on All-New England Cast, and to win the Brother John Award for Best Actor in New England. The company closed the season with three student directed scenes, and a membership of 92.

Season number six opened with a giant production of the hit Broadway musical The Robber Bridegroom. With 54 cast members and another 40 working tech, it was the companies biggest show to date. Our children's theatre, again sponsored by Crossroads Arts Council, was Paul Sills' Story Theatre. The spring saw us in One-Act competition with The War on Tatem. We won in the district and went on to States. "Stage 40" closed the year with a very successful production of Neil Simon's comedy hit The Odd Couple.

This season will open with the musical Dames at Seas. We will present the children's classic The Velveteen Rabbit for children's theatre. The company will again enter One-Act competition as well as sponsor a trip to New York City.

"STAGE 40" AND ACADEMICS

One of the most often questioned conflicting areas for "Stage 40" has been the seeming conflict of time and dedication to the theatre with academics. The company, an educational theatre, expects the work done for it to be a learning experience for the students participating. It would defeat the very purpose of the discipline which theatre imposes if academics were to take a second place to the theatre. The company expects its members to take their academic pursuits seriously and to place them first in planning. It is the belief of the "Stage 40" Board of Directors that students involved with the company should plan their time to include both theatre work and academics with a high degree of excellence in both.

Frequently study areas are set up during rehearsals. They are to be respected as quiet areas within range of hearing cues on the stage. This asks a lot of young people, but perhaps that is not bad.

The excuse that drama has left no time for study implies poor planning on the student's part. Rehearsal schedules are set and announced well in advance. STUDENTS SHOULD CAREFULLY PLAN THEIR STUDY HOURS AROUND THE SCHEDULED REHEARSAL TIMES. This will then give an orderly pattern to course work and preparation. Because "Stage 40" strives for excellence, students unwilling to adapt their study habits to the company's schedule will find working with us difficult. With approximately 85 members a year there have been surprisingly few students who have suffered academically as a direct result of the company. Students having particular difficulty are encouraged to speak with their director as soon as a problem emerges.

"Stage 40" produces theatre on the assumption that Mill River students will not need to chose "between" theatre excellence and academic excellence, but rather they will select both and achieve both. The number of students who have successfully done this over the past five years is legion now.

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of a member of "Stage 40" are many and varied. A member is responsible to him or herself not only in the company, but also as a student within the expectations of one's academics.

Expectations are high. The resonsibilities begin even before an actor, actress or technician goes out for a show. The realization must come early that preparations for any production require vast amounts of time, energy, and dedication.

Time, being a very important factor in theatre, is soon found valuable to a "Stage 40" member. The apprentice quickly learns that scheduling means budgeting time to accomodate the pressures of rehearsals and homework. With less free time and the responsibility of sensible juggling of time and schedule, the goals can be accomplished successfully.

To keep the energy level of "Stage 40" at its respected peak, the company requires self-discipline necessary for individual energizing. Again, the balance must be carefully planned evenly between academics and rehearsal.

Dedication involves rehearsal attendence, memorization of lines, and actor/actress preparation. "Stage 40" requires a great deal of dedication. But as an extra-curricular activity, dedication to "Stage 40" also implies dedication to oneself as a student with academic responsibilities claiming first place in the time budget.

Time, energy, and dedication are the three elements intrinsic to the teachings of an educational theatre such as "Stage 40." The use of the company as a reason to cut classes, leave homework undone, or to dodge other responsibilities is to defeat the very purpose of the company.

LETTERS BY THE BOARD MEMBERS CONCERNING THEIR MEMBERSHIP

Looking forward to my third year of involvement with "Stage 40," I contemplate upon the past two season. The effects it has had on my life and on others is worth the thought. There have been a few nights we have all gotten very little sleep - but that is to be expected. Because of "Stage 40" many people already have, and others are looking forward to, a life in the theatre. If it weren't for "Stage 40" many people would probably end up either sitting in a comatose state in front of the television, or "hanging out" somewhere. Frankly I'd rather be hanging a light - or in an intense rehearsal.

Probably one of the things "Stage 40" does best is creating lasting friendships. Those are a few of the many reasons "Stage 40" is such a fun learning experience.

CHRIS RHODES '83

When I joined "Stage 40" two years ago, I first got the part of Howie Newsome in Our Town. In this show I learned how much concentration, devotion and just plain work it takes to get a show up to the level that this company requires.

After gaining experience in Our Town, I played a Prince in the children's theatre to houses full of kids. It is one of the best experiences anyone can have.

The one-act competition is.... well, interesting. How anyone can call dying in your seat until the judges announce the decision fun is beyond me - but I want to do it again this year.

All in all, "Stage 40" is one of the most enjoyable and best experiences in my life.

JIM GILMOUR, '83

I had been a student at Mill River for two years before I got involved in "Stage 40." First I was a techie for Our Town and then I was in the ensemble of 'Spoon River Anthology." I met and became friends with many of the people in "Stage 40." I began to respect myself and to gain the respect of others. I can't imagine being the person I feel I am now without having the experience of knowing and working with the people in "Stage 40."

JOAN LATTUCA, '82

In the past two years that I have spent with "Stage 40," I've gained a great sense of responsibility and self-confidence. I've learned how to discipline myself. When I work with other people and accomplish something I feel a sense of pride. I love the camaraderie that stems from working together.

I've learned how interesting various aspects of theatre are. I love teching as much as acting (well, almost!). Continously I learn. With each new project that I work on I learn something new about the theatre. But more importantly, I learn about myself.

JENNIFER A. TAYLOR, '83

As I begin my second season with "Stage 40," I expect to learn a lot more about the way our company functions. I had a great time last year working hard on the productions I was involved with and making some new friends. Last year I started out in the company as a walk-on in a show where I didn't even know the basic plotline. I then worked as the producer for the One-Acts, and I finished the year with the lead in the spring show. While "Stage 40" has kept me pretty busy, I can't seem to get enough of it. I encourage all prospective members to give it a try.

MICHAEL UPTON, '82

I have been in "Stage 40" for the past two years, and I plan on another two. In "Stage 40" I have learned more than just about theatre. I have also learned an understanding about people.

With my work this summer in the "Children's Theatre Company" of Minneapolis, and in the work that I have done with "Stage 40," I feel that I have learned the key to a successful theatre program. It is the ability of the people to work with each other and to get along with each other. I think that "Stage 40" accomplishes this.

I hope that, with my help, "Stage 40" will have another good year this year.

JEFFREY WEEKS, '83

CONSTITUTION: "STAGE 40"
Mill River Union High School
North Clarendon, Vermont 05759

Section I:

Article I: A person becomes a member of "Stage 40" at an apprentice level after completing work on one production.

Article II: A person who has earned 25 points as an apprentice will become a player in the "Stage 40" Company

Article III: A person who earns more than 50 points, 25 as an apprentice and 25 as a player, will become an honor player.

Section II:

Article I: To acquire points in the "Stage 40" Company a person must work on productions, assemblies banquets, or do stage work for Pop Rock Ensemble.

Article II: The amount of points earned by an apprentice or a player is based on the type of work done and how well that work is done. Recommendations are made to the Board of Directors by stage managers, directors and producers, but the final decision is made by the "Stage 40" Board of Directors.

Article III: The "Stage 40" point system will be modeled after the point system of the International Thespian Society.

Section III:

Article I: To remain a member of the Company a person must earn a minimum of five points a season, after first becoming a member.

Article II: If a person does not earn five or more points a season he or she is relieved of his player status, regardless of the total number of points he or she has earned over the years of membership.

Article III: If in a season a person is relieved of his player status, and he or she returns the following year to continue work, that person will be started with five points in the apprentice ranks.

Section IV:

Article I: An apprentice is a member of "Stage 40" with voting rights and all privilieges under the by-laws of "Stage 40."

Article II: The following is the point system as established and accepted by the Board of Directors of the said company:

ACTING

	One-Act	Full-length
major role	4	8
minor role	3	5
walk on role	1	2
chorus	1	3
dancer	1	3
understudy	1	2

DIRECTING

director	4	8
assistant director	3	6
vocal director	3	6
assistant vocal director	2	5
orchestra or band director	3	6
assistant band director	2	5
choreographer	4	7
assistant choreographer	3	5

CLUB OFFICERS

Member of the Board	6

MISCELLANEOUS

dramatic reading	2
theatre festival participation	(varies)
assembly programs	1

TECHNICAL WORK

technical director	4	8
stage manager	4	8
lighting designer	3	6
lighting crew	2	3
set designer	4	6
set crew	2	3
costume designer	3	6
costume crew	2	5
properties designer	3	5
properties crew	2	3
sound designer	3	5
sound crew	2	3
make-up designer	3	5
pianist for musical	3	6
musicians	2	3

BUSINESS AND/OR PRODUCTION

producer	4	6
production crew	2	4
ticket manager	2	4
house manager	2	4
house crew	1	2
ushers	1	1
program chairman	1	3
program crew	1	2

WRITING

Writing and producing an original play	5	8
Writing and producing an original radio script	4	6
Writing and producing a TV script	4	6

SECTION V

Article I: The Board of Directors of "Stage 40" shall be the single governing agent for the company responsible directly to the advisor, principal and/or the Mill River School Board.

Article II: Members of the company seeking changes in the company policy must present all proposals to the Board of Directors at an announced meeting. All Board meetings are open to all members of the Company. No policy can be officially enacted without the majority support of the Board of Directors.

Article III: The Board of Directors of "Stage 40" shall consist of 7 members; the Company Advisor and six elected students. The students shall hold two one year seats elected annually, and four two year seats to be staggered so that only two are elected annually.

Article IV: The Board of Directors shall declare four seats open each May (two one year seats, and two two year seats) and shall allow any member of the company to declare him or herself as a candidate for that seat. Elections must be held by May 30th of each year.

Article V: In the event of a resignation from the Board of Directors, the Company gives the Board of Directors the right to appoint a member to fill the remaining term.

Article VI: In the event of a Board member missing four or more meetings in a given year, the Board of Directors may move to impeach said member from the Board of Directors. A vote of impeachment must receive six (6) votes in order to pass.

SECTION VI

Article I: No one with a non-student status at Mill River Union High School will be eligible for the nomination for a "Stage 40" Award in any of the five catagories of theatrical excellence.

Article II: No person who is a part-time student at Mill River Union High School and at the same time enrolled full-time at another secondary school will be eligible for the above awards.

Article III: Any and all full-time Mill River Union High School students are eligible for nomination and/or reception of the "Stage 40" Awards.

SECTION VII

Article I: The Board of Directors of "Stage 40" will award Drama Letters provided by the parents' group.

Article II: "Stage 40" adopts the policy of the Mill River Union High School on the eligibility and distribution of letters.

Article III: When a member of "Stage 40" has reached Player status he will be eligible to receive a letter from "Stage 40."

Article IV: If a player reaches the status of Honor Player he will be eligible to receive the comedy-tragedy pin.

Article V: An Honor Player may receive additional pins for every twenty-five points above the fifty honor points.